



# Given Half a Chance:

The Schott 50 State Report  
on Public Education and Black Males

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2008

Schott  FOUNDATION *for* PUBLIC EDUCATION  
*Fairness Access Opportunity*

[www.blackboysreport.org](http://www.blackboysreport.org)

## FOREWORD

In 2003, The Schott Foundation for Public Education, under the leadership of my predecessor, Dr. Rosa Smith, and researcher Michael Holzman, began an intense investigation into the educational performance of Black males across the nation. The results were alarming and served to alert the advocacy, research, and philanthropic communities of an American crisis.



While previous efforts were successful in increasing the engagement of private communities on the issue, little has been accomplished towards constructing the programmatic pipeline, as well as institutionalizing the policy recommendations needed to change the outcomes. As Schott publishes this report, we also begin the next phase of this work. Along with the promulgation of relevant data for advocates, we will increase our efforts to develop and participate in the types of collaborations, strategic philanthropic efforts, policy advocacy, and good practices that will systemically impact the pervasive disparities. The rate at which Black males are dropping out and being placed in special education far exceeds the rate at which they are graduating and reaching high levels of academic achievement. A deliberate, intense focus is needed to disrupt and redirect the current educational trajectory for Black males.

The Schott Foundation seeks and welcomes partners in this critical battle. Our combined thought leadership, resources, and action are needed to ensure that all students, regardless of race, gender, or native language, have a fair and equitable opportunity to learn and to participate in our democratic society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. H. Jackson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. John H. Jackson  
President & CEO

# Given Half a Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over five years, The Schott Foundation for Public Education has tracked the performance of Black males in public education systems across the nation.\* Past efforts by Schott were designed to raise the nation's consciousness about the critical education issues affecting Black males; low graduation rates, high rates of placement in special education, and the disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions, to name a few.

The 2008 edition, *Given Half a Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males*, details the drastic range of outcomes for Black males, especially the tragic results in many of the nation's biggest cities. *Given Half a Chance* also deliberately highlights the resource disparities that exist in schools attended by Black males and their White, non-Hispanic counterparts. The 2008 Schott report documents that states and most districts with large Black enrollments educate their White, non-Hispanic children, but do not similarly educate the majority of their Black male students. Key examples:

- ◆ More than half of Black males did not receive diplomas with their cohort in 2005/2006.
- ◆ The state of New York has 3 of the 10 districts with the lowest graduation rates for Black males.
- ◆ The one million Black male students enrolled in the New York, Florida, and Georgia public schools are twice as likely not to graduate with their class as to do so.
- ◆ Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, South Carolina, and Wisconsin graduated fewer Black males with their peer group than the national average.
- ◆ Nevada and Florida graduated less than a third of their Black male students on schedule.
- ◆ Illinois and Wisconsin have nearly 40-point gaps between how effectively they educate their Black and White non-Hispanic male students.

These trends, and others cited in *Given Half a Chance*, are evidence of a school-age population that is substantively denied an opportunity to learn, and of a nation at risk.

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\* Black students are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as "students having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa as reported by their school." Data in the Report are based on information from the U. S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and Office for Civil Rights, state departments of education and local school districts.

# Why Schott Focuses on Black Males

Over the last 25 years, the social, educational and economic outcomes for Black males have been more systemically devastating than the outcomes for any other racial or ethnic group or gender. Black males have consistently low educational attainment levels, are *more* chronically unemployed and underemployed, are less healthy and have access to fewer health care resources, die *much* younger, and are *many times* more likely to be sent to jail for periods *significantly longer* than males of other racial/ethnic groups. On average, Black males are more likely to attend the most segregated and least resourced public schools.

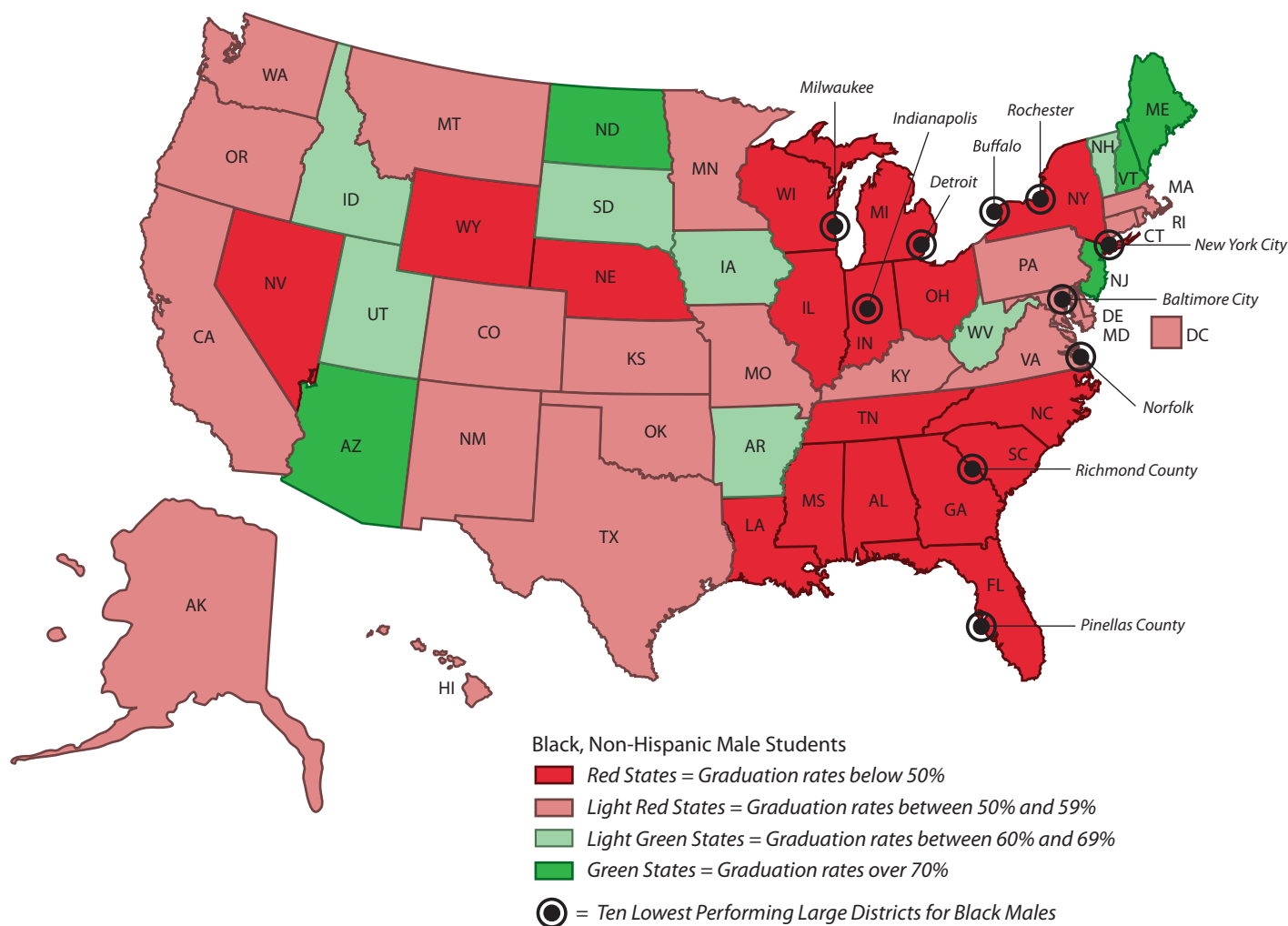
Latinos occupy this position in at least four states. Latino male students, who may be of any race, graduate at an estimated rate of 57% nationally. California, which has the largest Latino population, had an estimated graduation rate of 61%, while the rates for Texas and Florida were at the 50% level. The highest Latino graduation rate for any state with a significant Latino population is New Jersey, at 70%; the lowest is New York, at 38%. (Immigration patterns make it difficult to calculate meaningful Latino graduation rates for a number of states, most notably Arizona, Utah and Minnesota.)

American Indian students who attend public schools are the major group condemned to the worst schools in two or three states. However, in most states, the stratification of school quality works to minimize educational opportunities specifically for Black students.

If Black students did poorly in all schools, we would plausibly seek solutions to the problem of their achievement among those students themselves. The same would be the case if, in schools with majority Black enrollments, Black students did poorly and the other students did well. But in reality, Black students in good schools do well. At the same time, White, non-Hispanic students who attend schools where most of the students are Black and their graduation rates are low, also do poorly. The crisis of the education of Black males sits squarely in the middle of the crisis America faces as we work to create a world-class public education system that will support and maintain the values of a fair and equitable democratic society.



## STATE BY STATE GRADUATION RATES FOR BLACK MALE STUDENTS



# States of Emergency

The educational inequities in graduation rates and achievement gaps impacting Black males are national and pervasive. As Table 1 indicates, the ten states with the lowest graduation rates enroll more than 1,600,000 Black male students, which represent 40% of the Black male public school population.

**TABLE 1**  
**TEN LOWEST PERFORMING STATES FOR BLACK MALES**

LOWEST PERFORMING STATES	TOTAL BLACK MALE ENROLLMENT	GRADUATION RATES 2005/06 COHORT		GAP*
		BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
41. Wyoming	608	41%	72%	32%
42. Georgia	308,716	40%	58%	18%
43. Illinois	216,782	40%	82%	41%
44. Nevada	23,553	40%	55%	16%
45. New York	285,694	39%	75%	37%
46. Florida	326,757	38%	60%	22%
47. Louisiana	147,030	38%	60%	21%
48. South Carolina	142,496	38%	59%	20%
49. Wisconsin	46,379	36%	87%	50%
50. Michigan	174,790	33%	74%	41%

The worst problems are concentrated in a few large metropolitan areas. Specifically, New York City, Chicago, Detroit, and Dade County fail to graduate the great majority of their Black male students with their peers. Districts such as these, in which Black students are concentrated, tend to have racially segregated schools that are demonstrably inferior educational institutions; very few children do well in these schools. There and elsewhere, schools attended mostly by Black students do worse on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), suspend and expel disproportionately more Black male students than White male students, and assign more Black male students than White male students to special education using procedures open to abuse. In these settings and under these conditions, Black male students are substantively prevented from receiving a high school diploma in four years with their peers.



\* Gap numbers are rounded



**TABLE 2**  
**TEN LOWEST PERFORMING LARGE DISTRICTS FOR BLACK MALES**

LOWEST PERFORMING LARGE DISTRICTS	BLACK MALE ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED GRADUATION RATES 2005/06		GAP*
		BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
54. New York City (NY)	159,555	32%	57%	24%
55. Milwaukee (WI)	26,818	32%	46%	14%
56. Buffalo (NY)	10,666	31%	50%	19%
57. Baltimore City (MD)	38,996	31%	37%	6%
58. Richmond County (GA)	12,091	31%	43%	12%
59. Pinellas County (FL)	11,319	30%	50%	20%
60. Rochester (NY)	11,270	29%	36%	7%
61. Norfolk (VA)	12,672	27%	44%	17%
62. Detroit (MI)	59,807	20%	17%	-3%
63. Indianapolis (IN)	11,593	19%	19%	0%

## Formula <sub>for</sub> Success

The difference between the top schools and the bottom schools in a given state is not difficult to discern or surprising. Good schools are fully resourced, with talented, caring teachers, well-trained and numerous support staff, and protective and supportive administrators — and poorly performing schools are not. Good schools have challenging curricula, high expectations for all students, and an expectation of success. Poor schools do not. Good schools have libraries, an adequate supply of textbooks and computers, art and music programs, and science labs. Most schools with majority Black enrollments do not.

\* Gap numbers are rounded

**TABLE 3**  
**TEN BEST PERFORMING STATES FOR BLACK MALES**

BEST PERFORMING STATES	TOTAL BLACK MALE ENROLLMENT	GRADUATION RATES 2005/06 COHORT		GAP*
		BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
1. North Dakota	796	89%	84%	-5%
2. Vermont	765	88%	75%	-13%
3. Maine	2,123	85%	75%	-10%
4. Arizona	29,085	81%	82%	1%
5. New Jersey	125,019	74%	92%	19%
6. Iowa	12,468	69%	87%	18%
7. Utah	3,398	69%	88%	18%
8. Idaho	1,369	64%	77%	13%
9. Arkansas	54,984	63%	74%	11%
10. West Virginia	7,240	63%	69%	7%

As Table 3 indicates, there are some states that have made progress. The state of New Jersey, as a whole, graduates its Black male students at the same rate as the national average for White, non-Hispanic male students. Many of the other states in the top ten lack large Black populations, therefore Black males in those states are more likely to be educated in a diverse educational environment. This underscores the fact that when Black males are given access to schools and resources similar to those given to White males their performance levels improve.

There are districts that are successful with this most vulnerable group of America's children. The public schools in Fort Bend, Texas, enroll over 10,000 Black male students and graduate over 80% within four years, a graduation rate virtually identical to the district's graduation rate for White, non-Hispanic male students. Fort Bend has few drop-outs and no achievement gap. Two large suburban Maryland districts — Baltimore County and Montgomery County — have large Black enrollments and graduate Black male students with their peers at a rate comparable to the national average for White, non-Hispanic male students.

\* Gap numbers are rounded



**TABLE 4**  
**TEN BEST PERFORMING LARGE DISTRICTS FOR BLACK MALES**

BEST PERFORMING LARGE DISTRICTS	BLACK MALE ENROLLMENT	ESTIMATED GRADUATION RATES 2005/06		GAP*
		BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
1. Fort Bend (TX)	10,851	82%	85%	3%
2. Baltimore County (MD)	21,444	72%	79%	7%
3. Montgomery County (MD)	16,226	69%	87%	17%
4. Newark (NJ)	12,630	60%	73%	13%
5. Prince George's County (MD)	51,845	59%	58%	-2%
6. Gwinnett County (GA)	18,379	58%	64%	6%
7. Cobb County (GA)	15,998	57%	73%	16%
8. East Baton Rouge Parish (LA)	19,776	57%	63%	7%
9. Cumberland County (NC)	13,619	56%	65%	10%
10. Guilford County (NC)	15,687	56%	76%	21%

Community and family factors in these places are not terribly different from those elsewhere in the country. The difference is the quality of the educational institutions attended by their Black students. The data highlighted in *Given Half a Chance* substantiates that graduation and achievement gaps reflect the differences in the quality of the opportunities available, not differences in students' ability.

Black male students do much better in schools where most of the students are White, non-Hispanics, and White, non-Hispanic students and Asian students do poorly in schools where most of the students are Black. It is not a matter of the "benefits" for Black students from sitting next to White students; it is that a much higher proportion of White, non-Hispanic and Asian-American students in each state are enrolled in well-resourced schools than Black students. In most of the country, the chances that a Black male will have highly effective teachers are a third of that for White, non-Hispanic male students. The national view of graduation rates for Black male students compared to White and Latino male students is shown in Tables 5 and 6.

\* Gap numbers are rounded

More than fifty years ago, the *Brown* decision mandated that public educational opportunities be equitably distributed to all students regardless of race. Today, the analysis in *Given Half a Chance* dramatically illustrates the need for policymakers, philanthropic leaders, and community advocates to answer several basic questions:

***Why are there schools in the U.S. that are so inadequately resourced?***

***Why are most Black male students in the schools that are under-resourced, providing them with less access to early education, highly effective teachers, and a college bound curricula?***

In an effort to answer these critical questions and change the current educational trajectory of Black males, over the next five years The Schott Foundation for Public Education will work collaboratively to:

- ◆ Promote a 50 percent increase in the graduation rate for Black male students over a five-year period;
- ◆ Invest in strategic philanthropy to encourage Congress and states to pass legislation that contains meaningful accountability for schools, districts, and states with low graduation rates when disaggregated by race and gender;
- ◆ Manage the Winning Strategies Donors Collaborative to convene funders to identify and support promising policy and programmatic practices to change the current educational outcome trajectory of Black males;
- ◆ Promote an increase in the number of Black male teachers and policy advocates;
- ◆ Promote federal hearings and investigations into the operations of “drop out factories”;
- ◆ Promote the monitoring of resource accountability in states and cities with less than a 50% graduation rate for Black males and more than a 15 point disparity in the performance of Black males and White non-Hispanic males;
- ◆ Pool private and corporate philanthropic resources to increase the opportunity to learn for all students by equitably increasing access to early education, highly effective teachers, and college bound curricula;
- ◆ Advocate for governmental institutionalization and increased support of organizations conducting mentoring and wraparound services focused specifically on impacting the educational outcomes for Black males; and
- ◆ Develop and maintain an online data clearinghouse for the performance of public schools and Black males ([www.blackboysreport.org](http://www.blackboysreport.org)).

For each student the U.S. fails to educate, there is a cost to the individual and to taxpayers that runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. All children deserve an opportunity to learn. The nation's progress in providing Black male students an equitable opportunity to learn is a major indicator of the success of the country's efforts to improve American education as a whole.

## GivenHalf aChance:

The Schott 50 State Report  
on Public Education and Black Males

For the full report  
and more information on *YOUR* state's performance,  
logon to:

[www.blackboysreport.org](http://www.blackboysreport.org)

This online database is designed to allow policymakers, school officials, community-based organizations, and philanthropic partners to access achievement measurements and other reports on their specific state and major urban centers. In addition to graduation rates, the online report will provide, where available, National Assessment of Educational Progress, special education, school discipline, and Advanced Placement data. Through this mode of distribution, The Schott Foundation seeks to provide more communities with access to the critical data needed to lead reform efforts to change the educational experiences and trajectory for Black males.



**TABLE 5**  
**STATE BY STATE GRADUATION RATES AND GAPS FOR BLACK AND WHITE MALE STUDENTS**

STATE	GRADUATION RATES 2005/6 COHORT		GAP*
	BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
Alabama	43%	63%	20%
Alaska	53%	69%	16%
Arizona	81%	82%	1%
Arkansas	63%	74%	11%
California	54%	75%	21%
Colorado	58%	78%	20%
Connecticut	51%	83%	32%
Delaware	51%	69%	18%
District of Columbia	55%	84%	30%
Florida	38%	60%	22%
Georgia	40%	58%	18%
Hawaii	53%	61%	8%
Idaho	64%	77%	13%
Illinois	40%	82%	41%
Indiana	43%	73%	30%
Iowa	69%	87%	18%
Kansas	53%	77%	24%
Kentucky	59%	68%	8%
Louisiana	38%	60%	21%
Maine	85%	75%	-10%
Maryland	55%	79%	24%
Massachusetts	51%	77%	26%
Michigan	33%	74%	41%
Minnesota	59%	86%	27%
Mississippi	49%	61%	12%
Missouri	54%	79%	25%
Montana	57%	81%	25%
Nebraska	44%	87%	43%

\* Gap numbers are rounded

**TABLE 5**  
**STATE BY STATE GRADUATION RATES AND GAPS FOR BLACK AND WHITE**  
**MALE STUDENTS (CONTINUED)**

STATE	GRADUATION RATES 2005/6 COHORT		GAP*
	BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
Nevada	40%	55%	16%
New Hampshire	61%	60%	-2%
New Jersey	74%	92%	19%
New Mexico	55%	67%	12%
New York	39%	75%	37%
North Carolina	49%	69%	19%
North Dakota	89%	84%	-5%
Ohio	49%	79%	30%
Oklahoma	59%	74%	15%
Oregon	58%	89%	31%
Pennsylvania	58%	84%	26%
Rhode Island	53%	73%	20%
South Carolina	38%	59%	20%
South Dakota	61%	82%	21%
Tennessee	44%	71%	26%
Texas	58%	74%	16%
USA	47%	75%	28%
Utah	69%	88%	18%
Vermont	88%	75%	-13%
Virginia	54%	75%	21%
Washington	50%	70%	19%
West Virginia	63%	69%	7%
Wisconsin	36%	87%	50%
Wyoming	41%	72%	32%

\* Gap numbers are rounded

**TABLE 6**  
**STATE GRADUATION RATES FOR BLACK, LATINO AND WHITE MALE STUDENTS**

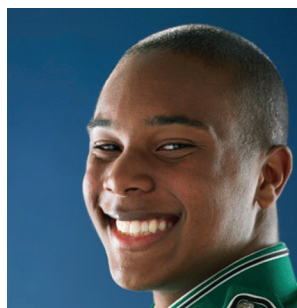
STATE	BLACK	LATINO	WHITE
Alabama	43%	60%	63%
Alaska	53%	* *	69%
Arkansas	63%	70%	74%
Arizona	81%	* *	82%
California	54%	61%	75%
Colorado	58%	62%	78%
Connecticut	51%	51%	83%
District of Columbia	55%	34%	84%
Delaware	51%	40%	69%
Florida	38%	49%	60%
Georgia	40%	47%	58%
Hawaii	53%	46%	61%
Idaho	64%	71%	77%
Illinois	40%	64%	82%
Indiana	43%	70%	73%
Iowa	69%	84%	87%
Kansas	53%	56%	77%
Kentucky	59%	61%	68%
Louisiana	38%	45%	60%
Maine	85%	* *	75%
Massachusetts	51%	54%	77%
Maryland	55%	69%	79%
Michigan	33%	48%	74%
Minnesota	59%	* *	86%
Missouri	54%	* *	79%
Mississippi	49%	51%	61%
Montana	57%	* *	81%
Nebraska	44%	63%	87%
Nevada	40%	* *	55%
New Hampshire	61%	* *	60%

\*\* Data unavailable



**TABLE 6**  
**STATE GRADUATION RATES FOR BLACK, LATINO AND WHITE MALE STUDENTS**  
(CONTINUED)

STATE	BLACK	LATINO	WHITE
New Jersey	74%	70%	92%
New Mexico	55%	46%	67%
New York	39%	38%	75%
North Carolina	49%	47%	69%
North Dakota	89%	74%	84%
Ohio	49%	61%	79%
Oklahoma	59%	59%	74%
Oregon	58%	* *	89%
Pennsylvania	58%	* *	84%
Rhode Island	53%	45%	73%
South Carolina	38%	44%	59%
Tennessee	44%	* *	71%
South Dakota	61%	72%	82%
Texas	58%	50%	74%
Utah	69%	* *	88%
Vermont	88%	* *	75%
Virginia	54%	55%	75%
Washington	50%	67%	70%
West Virginia	63%	83%	69%
Wisconsin	36%	65%	87%
Wyoming	41%	67%	72%
USA	47%	57%	75%



\*\* Data unavailable

**TABLE 7**

**GRADUATION RATES AND GAPS FOR THE TEN DISTRICTS WITH LARGEST ENROLLMENT OF BLACK MALE STUDENTS**

DISTRICTS	BLACK MALE	ESTIMATED GRADUATION RATES 2005/06		GAP*
		BLACK MALE	WHITE MALE	
1. New York City (NY)	159,555	32%	57%	24%
2. Chicago (IL)	102,185	37%	62%	24%
3. Philadelphia (PA)	60,838	46%	58%	11%
4. Detroit (MI)	59,807	20%	17%	-3%
5. Memphis City (TN)	52,720	35%	64%	30%
6. Broward County (FL)	52,537	38%	55%	17%
7. Prince George's County (MD)	51,845	59%	58%	-2%
8. Dade County (FL)	51,188	34%	55%	21%
9. Los Angeles (CA)	41,598	41%	58%	17%
10. Dekalb County (GA)	39,641	47%	61%	14%



\* Gap numbers are rounded

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\* Adapted from: Insight "Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families" p. 24, Winter 2007-2008.



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